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## **Chapter 5**

### **Media concepts and cultures: progressing learning from and for everyday life**

**Mandy Powell**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the United Kingdom, media education has been around in some form throughout the twentieth century but there has been little systematic research about what students should learn and what they might be expected to achieve at different ages. This chapter draws on data from a three-year project called Developing Media Literacy (DML)<sup>1</sup> involving learners from the ages of 5 to 16 in two locations in England with contrasting socio-economic and geographic profiles. The first setting comprised a small city with two universities and expanding high-tech industries, in which the percentage of young people entitled to free school meals was below the national average. The second setting comprised a small town with high unemployment and no further or higher education provision and located on the periphery of a large cosmopolitan city. The percentage of young people entitled to free school meals in this setting was above the national average. With a specific focus on learning progression, the project drew on sociocultural learning theory and media education pedagogy to bring students' out-of-school media cultures into dialogue with formal Media Studies concepts to develop media literacy.

#### **5.2 METHODOLOGY**

Based at the Institute of Education, University of London, the research project team worked with six non-selective state schools in total: a specialist Media Arts secondary school and two associated primary schools in each setting. A team of classroom

teachers, the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) and the English and Media Centre (EMC), developed a range of teaching strategies and materials across media themes and topics including advertising, horror films, celebrity, news and popular television.

Following parallel groups of learners in each location over three years, the research involved surveying 2,200 students and 160 teachers, focus group interviews with 350 students, 25 in-depth interviews with teachers and over 1,200 hours of in-depth classroom observations. Methods included comparing learners' media literacies longitudinally over time, comparing equivalent teaching/learning activities across age groups, comparing learners in different social and cultural groups and comparing learners' work in creative and critical modes.

Of particular interest was the relationship between learners' informal experiences and knowledges of media texts and technologies, the different types of concepts characterising the formal discipline of Media Studies and how meaningful learning might be progressed. In the United Kingdom, formal study of media is framed by four over-arching meta-concepts: Language, Representation, Institution and Audience. These second-order concepts have been described as methodological tools that provide a disciplinary structure within which substantive or first order concepts such as stereotyping in the context of Representation or regulation in the context of Institution, are understood (van Drie and van Boxtel, 2008). Wood (2007) argues that teaching and learning in and about society requires grappling with complexity and contention holistically but social studies pedagogy in schools avoids the "slippery stuff" by teaching substantive concepts as incontrovertible facts. By using meta-

concepts to frame the teaching materials, the DML project hoped to promote teaching and learning that positioned media culture as a subject for inquiry rather than a subject about which to acquire facts (Lee and Shemilt, 2003).

The project drew upon Bruner's idea of a spiral curriculum (1960) whereby concepts and processes are recursively revisited in increasingly sophisticated ways. For Bruner, learning about disciplinary structure, its meta-concepts and the relationship between them, increases learners' ability to transfer and apply their learning in other contexts. Using this model, therefore, enabled the research to explicitly address a range of questions from the organisation of learning in ages and stages (Piaget, 1976), in general, to the organisation of media learning (Buckingham, 2003), in particular.

### **5.3 CLASSROOM MATERIALS**

The classroom activities were arranged into six units of work and implemented over two years. Learners in Years 2 (aged 6-7), 4 (aged 8-9), 8 (aged 12-13) and 10 (aged 14-15) were tracked over that period and by the end of the project were in Years 3, 5, 9 and 11. Each year group undertook the same topic at the same time and all the classroom teachers were brought together for training in each unit prior to implementation. The first two introductory units, *The Media Timecapsule* and *Advertising*, were intended as diagnostic activities with two aims: firstly, to provide insights into learners' existing media experiences and the strategies they used to interpret and evaluate unfamiliar cultural texts, and secondly, to provide insight into the different pedagogic strategies teachers deployed. Thereafter followed four more sustained units of work, each led by a meta-concept, Language, Representation, Institution or Audience, whose primary relationship is with each other (Wells, 2000).

Each unit of work provided a space for learners to explicitly draw upon out-of-school media experiences and practices specific to the topic in a range of critical and creative activities.

The main theme of this chapter is how to progress learning with and from learners' out-of-school media cultures through concept-led teaching. It will discuss the problem of finding correspondence between in-school and out-of-school knowledges and experiences and how to find pathways to meaningful learning (Dewey, 1915). The chapter argues it is crucial to maintain open inquiry if both teachers and learners are to avoid the pitfall of reifying the in-school/out-of-school binary. A holistic and reflexive approach requires consideration of wider school practices and teacher identity discourses in this respect. A snapshot of the unit of work on *Representation* and celebrity culture will illustrate these issues before concluding that the process of establishing what counts for learners is at least as important as what counts for teachers. Focusing on the relationship between first and second order concepts progresses learning about media cultures. More significantly, perhaps, focusing on the relationship between the second order meta-concepts themselves offers the prospect of deepening understanding of everyday life in-school as well as out-of-school.

#### **5.4 CONCEPTS AND LEARNING ABOUT MEDIA CULTURES**

The concept of Language suggests that different media have established familiar semiotic codes for the conveyance of meaning. Some children have knowledge of these conventions that, if recognised by teachers, has the potential to develop as well as challenge traditional ideas about literacy (Buckingham, 1993, Street, 1995). The concept implicates both producers and audiences in the process of making choices

about the construction and interpretation of meaning but these do not always correspond with each other. The unit of work led by *Language* focused on how suspense is conveyed in film and the key substantive concept in play was narrative.

Representation works from the premise that media construct versions of reality and it is potentially one of the more abstract of the meta-concepts. The re-presentational process involves making choices about what and how to include or exclude. The ways in which children and young people make decisions about what is real or unreal and how they navigate the binary can be especially “slippery” (Wood, 2007) in the classroom. This unit took celebrity as its topic and the substantive concept of stereotyping. Inquiry about the idea of celebrity was approached historically and focused on how audiences make and take meaning from representations and appropriate them into their own everyday lives (Duits and van Romondt Vis, 2009).

In some accounts of media literacy, Institution has been substituted by the more substantive concept of production. As a meta-concept, Institution is regarded as the most difficult to teach because it is too remote from learners’ everyday lives.

Reported variously as tedious, tangled and difficult, its collapse into a heap of facts about regulation and economics, ownership and control has resulted in a degree of conceptual intolerance for this particularly rebellious meta-concept. The unit of work led by *Institution* took news production as its topic and focused on the substantive concept of regulation. By enacting and embodying unfamiliar roles and practices, deeper learning about agency and power emerged (Parry and Powell, 2010).

Fresh thinking about participatory culture (Jenkins, 2008) questions the continuing relevance of Audience as a concept. As a meta-concept, however, Audience has long been problematic (Meikle and Young, 2012) but remains pervasive and elusive nevertheless. Inquiry about how to define and reach audiences and predict responses was framed by a topic on media campaigning to promote public health information. The substantive concept at work in this respect was targeting and learners inhabited the role of media researchers working in advertising agencies. In one Year 5 class, teaching for complexity moved learners from an axiomatic view of Audience as straightforward to a deeper understanding of Audiences as both shared and diverse but difficult to know.

The findings of scholars researching the efficacy of meta-level concepts (National Research Council, 2005, Milligan and Wood, 2010) suggest that abstract concepts are more fundamental to understanding than the everyday concrete facts of a subject. Meta-level concepts are not closed or easily defined but they enable learners to transfer understanding to new contexts. For researchers working on Project Chata, the key was to look for progression in young people's epistemological understandings of history "as opposed to the aggregation of historical facts" (Lee, Ashby and Dickinson, 1996). Previous attempts to develop a model of learning progression in school history had focused on more substantive subject concepts such as 'king' and 'peasant'. The Chata researchers found that the acquisition of facts did not facilitate learning beyond the concrete. More abstract disciplinary markers such as 'evidence' and 'change', however, enabled learners to approach the "core notions" (Gardner, 2009) of the subject. For the DML project team, the issue of what constitutes good practice in media education pedagogy was a constant theme. Explicitly and visibly working the

relationship between formal concepts and informal knowledges and experiences was a crucial element in this practice.

### **5.5 OUT-OF-SCHOOL/IN-SCHOOL LITERACIES: LOCATING VALUE**

As active participants in their different communities (Wenger, 1998), learners are informally “apprenticed” (Rogoff, 1995) into routines of making meaning. Lamont Hill (2008) suggests that for popular culture to generate “productive pedagogy” (Lingard, 2005) in the classroom, the work of bringing informal and formal literacies together requires careful handling. In Gardner’s (2009) work on multiple intelligences, one of the keys to progressing each learner’s potential is to offer a range of “entry points” that help position each learner “centrally within the topic”. These entry points, or orientations to learning, correspond to the disciplinary domains framing the formal school curriculum and include narrative, numerical, philosophical, aesthetic, practical and social modes. Importantly, however, these orientations are also rooted in the everyday situated practices of learners outside school. Finding and maintaining a productive correspondence between informal and formal literacies is an important stage in the process of positioning the learner more centrally. Lamont Hill describes this correspondence as a “desirable exchange rate”. In the classroom, formal and informal literacies must be exchanged but each must be recognised as adding value to the other.

In a primary school situated in the small town setting, staff were anxious to promote traditional academic literacies to counter what they perceived to be socio-cultural deficits in the community. For teachers in this setting, learning was not conceptualised as moving “more deeply into and through social existence” but as



movement “away from ordinary social existence” (Lave, 2008, p13). In this context, wider school discourses constructed the community as ‘other’ and generated a polarisation between out-of-school and in-school literacies. Apprenticed by their own situated and everyday practices, the teachers in this school perceived contemporary media culture as contributing to “toxic” childhoods (Palmer, 2007). For them, the possibility of a desirable exchange between informal and formal practices was remote. Nevertheless, the school was keen to take part in the project and during the unit of work on *Representation*, the teacher introduced a weekly gossip magazine into the classroom. Using popular culture in the classroom was not an everyday event, however unlike the practice of reading a book silently. As a consequence, popular culture remained on the periphery of formal academic literacies and worked only to reify the in-school/out-of-school binary even further.

This happened on a number of occasions throughout the project and raises important questions about how teachers understand the out-of-school media cultures of learners. The difficulties involved in recognising a positive exchange value in some media cultures emerged in all research schools in both locations at some point, regardless of whether teachers had expertise in media education or Media Studies.

The on-line survey of teachers and learners conducted at the beginning of the DML project collected data about both out-of-school and in-school media cultures (Burn, et al, 2010). Using this information to recognise exchange value, however, was limited and ran the risk of consigning those cultures to the periphery of formal academic cultures and reinforcing the in-school/out-of-school binary (Lamont Hill 2008). The

first unit of work, therefore, was designed to provide a space where everyday and spontaneous “lay-thinking” (Magioglou, 2008) could be explored in more depth.

## **5.6 TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING EVERYDAY MEDIA CULTURES**

The *Media Timecapsule* unit was the first and introductory project activity. Composed of two parts, the first involved finding a timecapsule filled with historical media artefacts buried by someone unknown fifty years ago. The second stage involved learners making a contemporary version that someone equally unknown would find fifty years hence. Two main and overlapping aims informed its development. The first was to explore young people’s existing and everyday media literacies further than the survey allowed. What “ordinary” knowledges and experiences of everyday life did learners call upon to make and take meaning from media texts? Discussing their own tastes and preferences, learners drew implicitly on the concepts of Representation and Audience. Using unfamiliar media introduced the routines of media education pedagogy, foregrounding an explicitly inquiry-led approach to media cultures. In social and cultural psychology, when communities encounter unfamiliar objects, activities or events, they use existing and everyday knowledges and experiences to re-situate them in more familiar contexts. Conversely, the familiar can be rendered unfamiliar in the same way. In both cases, the process has the potential to create new meanings. Guided by a set of prompts derived from first and second order disciplinary concepts, learners discussed a range of artefacts including popular music, radio, television, film, adverts, comics and news items from the 1950s, using media past, therefore, to map the present and future of media learning.

## **5.7 RESISTING CRITICISM AND PROMOTING CRITIQUE**

All classes across the age range found two adverts in their media timecapsule, one for Butlins, a chain of affordable British holiday camps built in the 1930s, and one for Rowntrees Fruit Gums. In one primary school in the small town setting, the teacher used the timecapsule activity to introduce his Year 2 class to the meta-concepts and the formal routines of making meaning with media texts. Moving between denotation and connotation, “Don’t stop with what you *see* ... think about what you can *tell*”, the teacher encourages the young people to pay close attention to the visual codes, the Language of images. Some call the adverts “posters”, but their talk indicates an implicit understanding of the persuasive purpose of the representations on offer, “they make it look nice so people will want to go there”. The technologies of representation, the use of a more painterly aesthetic style for advertising purposes, were unfamiliar to them. Thinking about the uses of colour, however, and how a group of people and an idea are represented visually, enabled learners to make and take meaning. However, it became evident that the teacher’s desire for learners to resist advertising messages was simply a matter of equipping them with new and formal meaning-making tools. In this moment, then, the unit aim of introducing tools with which to investigate media language was distracted by a different purpose and open inquiry constrained.

The young people already knew one of the purposes of commercial adverts is to influence behaviour, “it’s to make you buy it”, or “to tell someone to eat fruit gums” and they knew these were messages they should resist. However, in a focus group discussion with the researcher, one child drew on her experiences of spending holidays at Butlins to compare the historic representation with her lived experience. She talked about contemporary advertising campaigns, noting in particular the change in Butlins’ target audience “now you’d see lots of children playing”. Some fifteen

year-olds in the secondary school in the same setting were also interested in the representations of youth conveyed by the 1950s advert and compared them to those of Club 18-30, a British company established in the 1970s, offering cut-price holidays aimed at young adults. The possibility of adverts functioning as evidence of social change enabled all these students to think about adverts as rich cultural resources but encouraging learners to share their experience to look for this exchange value is difficult when classroom pedagogy is framed by resistance.

Debates about convergence culture, the coming together of content and technology in everyday life, focus on the ways in which young people actively participate in contemporary media culture (Jenkins, 2006). Harnessing learners' contemporary experiences has the potential to develop media knowledge intuitively in non-linear time and on a horizontal axis (across concepts). Being open to the possibility of working across meta-concepts enables teachers to locate exchange value and make more meaningful connections between informal and formal knowledges. This process of finding entry points begins to situate the learner more centrally in the topic and identifies where meaningful teaching and learning might be discovered. What we began to see in this introductory activity, therefore, is a learning process that involves a concept-led movement across platforms and forms, time and space, in search of an entry point to learning that has the potential to deepen understanding of learners' everyday lived experience.

The task of constructing two contemporary media timecapsules, one individual and one shared, introduced the idea that learners' tastes and preferences are "worthy of contemplation" (Wenger, 1998) in their own right and that recognising a desirable

exchange value requires an open and reflexive approach. Wenger argues it is crucial to bring multiple perspectives, interests and interpretations together because the full participation of all members of the community is necessary to generate new learning for all. If advertising highlighted cultural consumption as a site of struggle in the early stages of the DML research, the unit of work on *Representation* underlined this further still.

## **5.8 CONCEPTS AND CELEBRITY CULTURES: LEARNING TO THEORISE FROM AND FOR EVERYDAY LIFE**

*Representation* was the second concept-led media unit and followed the unit on *Language*. Each unit of work had a three-act structure: the first activity was designed to construct a space where learners' own experiences and practices were explored, the second activity involved analysis work and the third involved production.

Historically, popular themes for teaching media representations in schools in the United Kingdom have included gender, race and ethnicity, but not social class, and have been intended, at least in part, as a political intervention in the practice of stereotyping. In the same way as learners are taught to resist commercial adverts, the teaching of stereotyping, a first-order substantive concept, has become technised (Lingard, 2005). Too familiar an enemy, stereotyping is routinely dismissed as an anti-social practice without examination of the social conditions in which popular media texts are circulated or indeed the ways in which they might be read (Bryan, 2012).

By eschewing a focus on gender, race or ethnicity, the aim was *not* to avoid issues of stereotyping. Instead, the unit aimed to take a more historically situated approach to

the consideration of Representation in the hope of avoiding the essentialist view as something done by ‘them’, media institutions, to ‘us’, media audiences (Bennett et al 2011). Young people and teachers are audiences, both shared and diverse, and in the earlier units of work, it was evident that drawing on their experiences and practices is productive in progressing learning. The role of the creative audience in the practices and routines of making meaning, as well as the role of producers and institutions in the production, circulation and distribution of cultural resources is important.

Not always successfully, the research team tried to avoid placing teachers in a situation where they might feel obliged to take up specific ideological positions, and potentially inhibit the process of making connections with learners’ own experiences and understandings (Williamson, 1981/1982). Working productively with learners’ popular media cultures depended upon recognising a desirable exchange value and if the process provoked cognitive dissonance (Alsup, 2005) or irreconcilable ruptures in school discourses, recognition was put at risk. The case of the weekly gossip magazine mentioned above is an example of this.

Celebrity had emerged as a recurring theme in earlier project activities. Without prompting, all age groups had talked spontaneously about celebrities and it was clear this was a potentially rich vein for bringing learners’ informal knowledges and experiences into contact with more formal academic ones. When the *Representation* unit was implemented, Michael Jackson had just died and the talk amongst primary school learners especially was replete with questions and assertions about him. In addition, reality formats such as *XFactor* (FremantleMedia), a music talent show broadcast on commercial television, and *I’m a Celebrity Get Me Out of Here* (ITV

Studios), a reality game show series, also broadcast on commercial television, were programmes they watched, enjoyed, talked about and participated in, neatly summed up by one fifteen year-old student thus, “celebrities *are* the news”.

This unit of work was designed to create a space in the classroom for learners and teachers to think about the ways in which they respond to media representations and how such responses articulate with the everyday (Duits and van Romondt Vis, 2009, Allen and Mendick, 2013). Celebrity was a topic that would necessarily raise questions about taste, identity and power and, most likely, provoke argument and debate. The research team anticipated the theme would bring into sharp relief some of the tensions involved when integrating popular culture into formal education.

Informing the design of this unit of work was a body of academic literature about celebrity (Evans and Hesmondhalgh, 2006, Turner, 2010). As with all the other units of work, a number of questions served as prompts. For the first activity, learners and teachers were encouraged to bring an image of a celebrity of their choice for display in a classroom collage and to either write or talk about their choice. The second activity was led by the teacher and involved analysing a range of case studies of celebrities, different images over time and in different contexts. Learners were then encouraged to construct their own case studies. The final activity involved learners in the manufacture of a new celebrity in role as a PR company, a cultural intermediary.

In one primary school in the small city setting, the idea of celebrity created difficulties for one classroom teacher to implement this unit of work. Instead the teacher devised an alternative theme of *Heroes and Heroines* and investigated the historical

representation of Robin Hood, a character in English folklore. The first classroom and teacher-led activity, therefore, involved establishing and working with the young people's lay knowledge but this was specifically with regard to Robin Hood, and served to illuminate what many of the young people did not know rather than connect with what they did. Furthermore, whilst the young people could discuss ideas about fame, accessing transferable knowledge about Representation in this context was much more difficult for them. In other research schools, teachers selected a range of different case studies that included historical examples, such as Queen Elizabeth I and Henry VIII but also included contemporary examples from the political sphere such as David Cameron, the current British Prime Minister, and Barack Obama, currently President of the United States. Importantly, case studies from popular culture were also included and teachers chose a range of celebrities that included David Beckham, Cheryl Cole, and Lady GaGa.

One group of six year-olds studying the representation of Robin Hood was selected for a focus group discussion. In this context, the young people drew spontaneously on contemporary reference points in discussion about the idea of fame. In response to a question about what sorts of things might make someone famous, Michael Jackson was the first popular cultural text they offered up as "worthy of contemplation". Two young people talked about Michael Jackson's music and traded favourite songs, *Billie-Jean* was auctioned as 'best' by one, whereas another asserted the superiority of *Thriller*. A third member of the group, Dana, interjected, 'I don't know any of his songs but people talk about him'. Dana did not know his songs but she did know, 'he performs and does things everyone wants to know about'. She continued



he has big audiences so everyone will be talking about him. I never used to know about Michael Jackson until he died and more and more people talked about him.

Dana also spoke about more of his albums being ‘published’ and, alluding to the economic realities of some young people’s experiences of family life and how this shapes models of childhood,

it’s his family ... they need to make more money from his albums. His sister, she’s a famous singer. The parents needed to make money from the children because they weren’t as famous.

In the first few minutes, Dana had implicitly theorised celebrity as a sociocultural phenomenon. She had talked about both the relationship between audiences and institutions, family in this case, and emergent understandings of the process of reproducing, distributing and circulating popular culture. Dana also implicated key social factors in the study of Representation, gender, ethnicity and class in particular.

This focus group discussion was significant for a number of reasons, not least because it enabled a desirable exchange value of the theme of celebrity to emerge and be recognised thus. More importantly, perhaps, Dana begins to construct an insightful account of the role of media in the reproduction of culture and Representation as social practice. It is clear, therefore, that Dana’s informal understandings have much to offer formal conceptual learning. Moreover, had these young people’s informal cultural capitals been recognised and brought into contact with formal conceptual

learning, their understanding about the sociocultural construction of Robin Hood as a historical heroic figure may have been much the richer.

Whilst an emergent and transferable understanding of the sociology of culture (Williams, 1981) became evident in a focus group discussion with Year 2 student, in the secondary site in the same setting, the male teacher of a Year 8 class opened the first activity with the question, 'What defines celebrity?'. The students drew on their own experiences to begin constructing a taxonomy ranging from the 'undeserved' such as 'people like Paris Hilton ... her dad started her career so she's not known for herself' and 'the new Dr Who assistant ... she only got the job because she's Catherine Tate's niece'. In this same category students placed 'attention seekers [who] do outrageous things ... take their clothes off' and 'Osama bin Laden'. A further undeserved attribution of fame was associated with appearance: 'usually famous for cosmetic reasons rather than anything useful or good'. This discussion, dominated by an articulate and vocal group of young women sitting at the front of the class, generated an opposition between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' celebrity and the taxonomy they produced corresponded to that noted by scholars in the field (Drake and Miah, 2010). These young female students predominantly identified women celebrities as 'undeserving'. Moreover, the cultural products constructing and distributing representations of 'undeserving' celebrities were deemed to have low cultural value. The emergence of a gendered and classed discourse in this classroom had the potential to locate these students centrally in the topic.

At this point, the teacher intervened with six pre-selected images of female celebrity from Hollywood.com, a US popular culture news website, and including Scarlet

Johannson, Angelina Jolie, Pamela Anderson and Naomi Watts. All the images constructed celebrity as white, blonde, popular film and television stars. The same group of female students who had previously judged weekly gossip magazines as unworthy of contemplation reacted: 'If celebrities are well known, I don't know anything of those [and] I don't know anything about celebrity!'. They rejected this construction of celebrity on the grounds that they were 'stereotypical'. However, the teacher had not noticed a small group of male students, huddled at the back of the same classroom whose attentions were arrested by these images instantly. Up to this point, they had disengaged from the more abstract class speculations around celebrity as an idea and were discussing, amongst themselves, the progress of various football teams in the World Cup.

For these older learners then, the strategy of combining abstract exploratory discussion with what the teachers knew would be controversial concrete cultural resources was potentially productive. The images were subjectively experienced and tangibly felt. The strategy generated conflicting responses from learners that had the potential to mine a rich source of cultural politics. However, it was evident the teacher was unsure about where to go with this, possibly because the young women reproduced his own discourse and reflected his own values and beliefs; they had given the right answer. In this example, the young men at the back of the class had nowhere to go either but equally neither did these young women. Learning did not progress, therefore, for either of these groups. Paradoxically, both learners and teachers ended up in exactly the place the research team had sought to avoid. To progress this early theorising about celebrity in greater depth, a horizontal movement toward other meta-concepts, Audience and Institution in this case, may have been more productive. Such

a movement might involve raising questions about how audiences are defined and targeted or how audiences interpret and use media images. It might also involve raising questions about the economics of media organisations. This example offers an interesting contrast to the primary school example. Here the judgment of one group of students that particular experiences and practices were ‘unworthy’ of contemplation prevented an examination of the social context in which these images were produced, circulated and consumed. Their reading of these images, a textual analysis, had focused on the signifiers white, blonde and woman and the social construction of this particular stereotype unexamined. Wenger (1998) suggests it is crucial to bring multiple perspectives, interests and interpretations together, including the small group of boys at the back of the class, because full participation of all members of the community is necessary if it is to generate new learning for everyone. However, both teachers and learners had found themselves in a place where recognising a desirable exchange value had become difficult. Had the teacher moved horizontally toward Institutions and Audiences, making a disciplinary shift from textual to social analysis, he may have been able to facilitate a deeper engagement with the concept of Representation on its vertical axis. More importantly, perhaps, this may have enabled teacher and learners to engage with the “slippery stuff” (Wood, 2007).

## **5.9 CONCLUSION**

The project’s research findings suggest that opening up a dialectic between in-school and out-of-school media cultures has the potential to develop understanding of social complexity and contention. Concept-led teaching offers a structure where learning about substantive concepts can be progressed vertically but more importantly, the

meta-concepts offer the possibility of transferring learning to everyday life and deepening understanding about learners' social experiences (Lave, 2008).

The research findings also point to the "the urgency of making wise decisions during constitutive moments" (Hampton, 2005, p.242) to recognise and maintain a desirable exchange value if popular culture is to be integrated successfully into formal education so that it generates new insights for everyone. Education professionals (and media professionals) are both involved in making such decisions when dominant discourses compete with the residual and emergent (Williams, 1981). Rather than seek to soothe these discursive troubles, teachers who teach for complexity can navigate dominant social and cultural orthodoxies and creatively challenge received wisdoms. Including the everyday experiences and practices of all learners, therefore, is central to this process.

## **NOTE**

<sup>1</sup>Professor David Buckingham and Professor Andrew Burn led the DML project and its two researchers were Dr Becky Parry and Dr Mandy Powell. The author would like to record her thanks to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for funding the research (RES-062-23-1292). She would also like to thank the teachers and students who committed their hard-pressed time to a complex project.

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